

2005 Marks Milestones for NRCS

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has a lot to celebrate in 2005. It marks the 70th anniversary of the agency and its continued commitment to conservation on private lands and the 20th anniversary of the agency's Earth Team, NRCS' volunteer program in service to conservation. "Both anniversaries reflect the agency's long standing commitment to the nation's natural resources and the people who volunteer on behalf of that commitment," said Michele Eginore, National Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator.

"Our mission to conserve, maintain and improve our natural resources is just as critical today, as it was in 1935 when the agency was commissioned."

The Earth Team Program, created in 1985, offers all types of opportunities to anyone over the age of 14 who is interested in volunteering and making a positive difference for the nation's natural resources. Earth Team volunteers help NRCS conservationists provide everything from conservation technical as-

sistance to teaching and generating awareness about conservation through the use of community projects. Volunteers often can be found helping with projects impacting water quality, community beautification and erosion control. In addition, Earth Team volunteers can work in NRCS offices providing clerical, computer and writing skills.

In fiscal year 2004, more than 40,000 Earth Team volunteers nationally donated more than 950,000 hours to conservation. "We at the NRCS are proud of the dedicated volunteers and employees who have committed their time and talents to conserving and protecting soil, water and wildlife for their community and everyone in it," said Eginore.

Additional information on NRCS programs and assistance and the Earth Team volunteer program is available on-line at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>.

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California

The Way We Were

By **RICHARD CASALE**

Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District Conservationist

Although California may be three hours behind Washington, DC, that didn't mean they weren't out in front when it came to getting on board with the new volunteer program. In fact during that second week in May 1981, Richard Casale, NRCS district conservationist in Santa Cruz County, California signed up the first three NRCS volunteers – a public affairs specialist, an education coordinator, and an administrative aide.

Education coordinator, Christine Hirsch conducted a two-credit



Christine Hirsch and NRCS District Conservationist Richard Casale review a conservation plan in 1981.

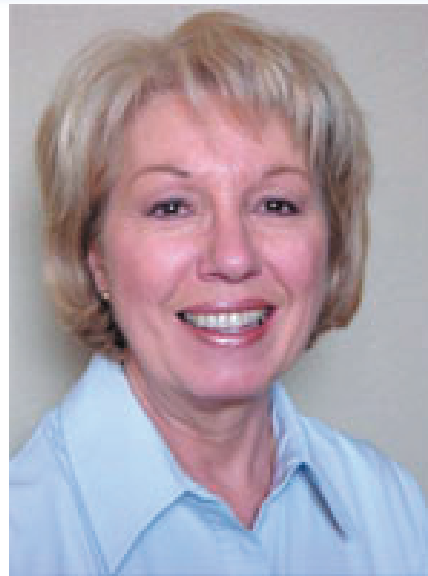
erosion control training course which she helped develop at Cabrillo Community College and an advanced course in erosion control

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National ET Volunteer Coordinators - Then ...

By **FRED JACOBS**
NHQ Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator

With the birth of the nationally-led Earth Team in 1985, the new position of National Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator was established and soon after, Judy Johnson became the first to serve in that job. Judy was no stranger to NRCS volunteer work having served a five month detail in 1982 as Iowa State Volunteer Coordinator where she initiated and directed a new NRCS “Volunteers in Conservation” program for Iowa. She also developed the first NRCS Volunteer Management Services training program, delivered across Iowa.



First National NRCS Earth Team
Volunteer Coordinator Judy Johnson

Judy served as Community Planner from November 1985 to April 1986 on the Iowa state staff providing volunteer program management training to states at the request of Chief Wilson Scaling. During this time the chief also appointed Judy as a charter member of the National Volunteer Steering Committee.

In April 1986, Judy was named the first National Volunteer Services Coordinator (National Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator). Through a cooperative agreement with the Soil Conservation Society of America, Judy was able to set up operations in Ankeny, Iowa, until October 1988 when she left to become Assistant State Conservationist, Massachusetts. During her tenure as National Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator, 1,200 volunteers contributed 95,000 hours.

After Judy left to become Assistant State Conservationist in Massachusetts in 1998, there was a succession of National Coordinators including Doug Gahn, Paula Cole-Jones, Jeff Anliker and Larry Holmes until the current coordinator, Michele Eginoire was named to the position in 1997.

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designed especially for people responsible for land use planning and resource conservation at the county level. Back in 1982 Christine described her experience as “My volunteer experience has opened up a lot of job opportunities for me.” Words that turned out to be prophetic as soon after, she landed a position with the Santa Cruz County Planning Department.

Public affairs specialist and

soil conservationist Kathryn Lyster donated several hours a week helping develop conservation plans, speaking at various organizations, and preparing conservation education and information materials. Experience that helped lead her to her current job in Madison, Wisconsin where she works as a teacher’s aide.

Eileen Hastings donated several hours a week helping assemble conservation plans and education packets; typing, filing, copying, and doing other office work.



Christine Hirsch and Richard Casale in
2005.

Eileen went on to earn her bachelors degree in biology at University of California at Davis.

... and Now

Michele was no stranger to the Earth Team, having served as Judy Johnson's secretary from 1986 through 1988. In 1986 Michelle became the Iowa State NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator and the following year she assumed the responsibilities of Midwestern Regional Coordinator.

In 1993 Michele served as the Volunteer Liaison for the Harmony Campaign prior to becoming National Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator in 1997 – where she still serves.

As National Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator, Michelle has seen her volunteers log-in over a million hours of service to NRCS during a one-year period.



Current National NRCS Earth Team
Volunteer Coordinator Michele Eginore

NRCS Applauds Earth Team Volunteers

President George W. Bush proclaimed April 17–23 as 2005 National Volunteer Week. On the heels of the President's proclamation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service congratulates and commends volunteers across the country who give their time and skill to improve, protect and conserve our natural resources. Last year more than 40,000 NRCS Earth Team volunteers contributed nearly one million hours to conservation.

The President's National Volunteer Week proclamation states: "Our Nation's volunteers inspire us with their dedication, commitment, and efforts to build a more hopeful country for our citizens... I call upon all Americans to recognize and celebrate the important work that volunteers do everyday across our country."

Retrospective: Earth Team Plus 20

Since the organization of local conservation districts in the 1930s, people have volunteered their time and talent to assist the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in getting conservation on the land. Through the decades, volunteering has remained an important part of America's conservation movement. Expanding the volunteer concept, Congress passed the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981, which provided that NRCS could accept volunteer services from any person to help with conservation work.

It wasn't until 1985 that the Earth Team as it exists today was born. Under Chief Wilson Scaling with the help and support of NRCS leadership, the volunteer movement in the agency evolved from a fragmented, locally-driven activity, to a national program that focused on every State throughout the Nation. A National Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator position was established, responsible for training, information, and developing national policy and procedures for the volunteer program. A national newsletter, the VolunteerVoice was started serving as a forum for information, "how to" tips, success stories, and management tips from State and National volunteer coordinators.

New National Earth Team HQ Hosts Earth Day Celebration

Merlin Bartz, NRCS Regional Assistant Chief - Central, representatives of Iowa's congressional delegation and Earth Team volunteers celebrated the Earth Team's 20th anniversary and NRCS' 70th anniversary at an open house and awards presentation April 22 in Des Moines. The occasion allowed Earth Team national office staff to unveil their new home at 5140 Park Avenue, Des Moines, IA., 50321 which also serves as the distribution site for 1-888-LANDCARE forms and publications.



Merlin Bartz, NRCS Regional Assistant Chief - Central, congratulates the Earth Team for reaching its 20th anniversary during an Earth Day open house at the new Earth Team National office in Des Moines, IA.



Actor and Earth Team Volunteer Eddie Albert once appeared in NRCS public service announcements.



Actor and Earth Team Volunteer Morgan Freeman holds the pair of Telly awards he won for narrating NRCS public service announcements while standing next to NRCS Mississippi State Public Affairs Specialist Jeannine May.



Actor Anthony Quinn donated his time and talents to the NRCS as an Earth Team Volunteer prior to his death in 2001.



Singer Loretta Lynn has helped spread the message of conservation by appearing in NRCS public service announcements as an Earth Team Volunteer.

All-Star Earth Team Volunteers

By **FRED JACOBS**
NHQ Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator

Over the years prominent entertainers including Loretta Lynn, Eddie Albert, Anthony Quinn, and Morgan Freeman have joined the ranks of the Earth Team. These public-spirited entertainers lent their time and talents to spread the word through public service announcements about the good soil and water conservation work NRCS does on private lands.

Most recently Actor Morgan Freeman won two Telly Awards for narrating NRCS public service announcements. The Telly Award is an annual video and film production competition that gives recognition to outstanding non-network and cable commercials.

Remembering D. Keith Parlette

By Elaine Tremble
NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

Working out of the Penobscot County, Maine, Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) office since 1997, Earth Team volunteer D. Keith Parlette put in countless hours assisting in watershed survey work, conservation buffer plantings, shrub sales, and providing additional assistance where needed until his passing at the age of 46.

Taking the lead on design and planting of a 125-foot buffer on the shores of Sebasticook Lake in Newport, Maine, Keith also managed the installation by the Sebasticook Lake Conservation Corps. Completed in 2000, the buffer is located near the lake outlet where



National Earth Team/LANDCARE Office Welcomes New Employees

Venessa Alvarado discovered the Earth Team in Des Moines, Iowa, where she volunteered her time helping organize publications and in-putting information into the database during the start-up of the new Earth Team/LANDCARE office. When a position at the new headquarters became available, she applied and was selected for the job. Venessa has found Des Moines, Iowa, to be quite a change from where she's lived before, but she is happy with her new role with the Earth Team. Venessa will be the main contact for all LANDCARE orders as well as serving as receptionist. She can be reached at 515-289-0325, ext. 100, or venessa.alvarado@ia.usda.gov.



Venessa Alvarado



Alan Benge

Alan Benge comes to Earth Team/LANDCARE headquarters from Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield where he worked for 13 years as a printing press operator, mail and warehouse employee. Alan has lived in Iowa all his life and has been an Earth Team Volunteer for a number of years working at conventions, expos, conservation and clean-up days, and helping out with conservation education programs at local schools. Alan will be responsible for order filling and inventory management. He can be reached at 515-289-0325, ext. 104, or alan.benge@ia.usda.gov.

John Gilman comes to Earth Team/LANDCARE headquarters from Electrical Power Products in Des Moines where he spent four years creating and implementing an internal and external communications program and as a manufacturing project manager. In addition to his private sector employment, John served on active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps as a journalist both in the continental United States and in Okinawa, Japan, from 1995-1999 and again in 2001- 2002 following 9/11. John will be working with LANDCARE orders, web pages, and providing marketing assistance for both Earth Team and LANDCARE. He can be reached at 515-289-0325, ext. 107, or john.gilman@ia.usda.gov.



John Gilman

In 1982, the National Volunteer program started with 327 volunteers who donated 29,000 hours. In 2004, more than 40,000 Earth Team volunteers donated nearly one million hours to conservation.



Did you know?

That persons providing voluntary service to NRCS as an Earth Team volunteer are not considered Federal employees, except for the purposes of:

- Workers' Compensation Program, under Chapter 81 of Title 5 of the United States Code for injuries sustained during the performance of authorized work assignments. Refer to the Federal Personnel Manual, Chapter 810, Injury Compensation, for additional information and references.
- Tort Claims Act, under Section 2671 through 2680 of Title 28 of the United States Code for protection from personal liability for common law torts committed within the scope of work assignments. Refer to Departmental Regulations 2510-1, Claims Against the United States, for additional information and references.
- Volunteers are provided Federal Coverage under the Tort Claims Act while operating a government-owned or leased vehicle for official purposes. If the volunteer is operating his/her private vehicle and is receiving compensation for mileage from NRCS, claims for injury or death of third parties or damage to their property are the responsibility of the volunteer and/or his/her personal insurance carrier, since mileage reimbursement includes the cost of collision and liability insurance. The Department of Justice determines on a case-by-case basis if a volunteer will be provided legal defense services as provided for by the Act.

Bits and Pieces

Subscribe to VolunteerVoice

The VolunteerVoice is now an on-line publication that will be produced as an Adobe portable document (PDF) file residing on the NRCS Earth Team website. Beginning with the fall 2004 issue, mass printing and distribution of paper copies ceased.

An online subscription form to the VolunteerVoice is available on the NRCS news lists page at <http://news-source.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

When the latest issue goes up on the NRCS Earth Team website, subscribers will receive an e-mail with a hyperlink to link directly to the publication.

VolunteerVoice Deadlines

Submittal deadlines for 2005 editions of the VolunteerVoice are listed below. Please remember to submit stories as Word files and photos as separate files in JPEG or TIFF format. Photos embedded in word documents or submitted as webpages present printing problems as they are not of high enough resolution to reproduce.

Deadlines are as follows:

- Summer 2005--Distribution July 2005. Deadline to submit: 6/15/05
 - Fall 2005--Distribution October 2005. Deadline to submit: 9/15/05
- Deadlines

Mark Your Calendars

Mark August 8-11, 2005, on your calendars as a reminder to attend the next National Earth Team/Public Affairs Conference at the Wyndham Philadelphia at Franklin Plaza hotel. Sharing of new ideas, lots of great workshops, and guest speakers are planned. The agenda is almost finalized. Look for further information soon.

Parting Shot ...

*"Volunteers are not paid
-- not because they are
worthless, but because
they are priceless."*

--Anonymous

Submission to VolunteerVoice

Articles and photographs for publication should be e-mailed, via your State Volunteer Coordinator, to fred.jacobs@usda.gov. If you prefer, copy can be mailed or faxed to NRCS Attn: Fred Jacobs, room 6114-S, PO Box 2890, Washington, DC 20250, fax number (202) 720-1564.

Please remember to include photographs to illustrate the article. JPG images are preferred. Slides and prints are accepted. If you are using a digital camera, remember to set the camera to the highest quality resolution.

For information about the Earth Team and the VolunteerVoice, go to www.nrcs.usda.gov or call 1-888-LANDCARE, or your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office listed in the telephone directory under "U.S. Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture."

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